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The Working Group on the Parents' Role
The Working Group on Business and Education
The Student Task Force

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Where The Legacy Begins: Report Of The Working Group On Early Childhood Education

April 1988

April 22, 1988

Mr. Barry M. Sullivan, Q.C.
Commissioner
Royal Commission on Education
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Mr. Commissioner:

I am pleased to submit the technical paper of the Royal Commission's Working Group on Pre-School Care and Early Childhood Education, pursuant to the assigned mandate:

> to develop for the Commissioner a technical paper which would provide an informed position on issues related to the experience and development of the child from birth to school entry.
>
> a) identify issues in the area of pre-school care and early childhood development;
>
> b) priorize the issues which can be addressed effectively within the time frame of the Royal Commission;
>
> c) analyze the key issues to establish a foundation for recommendations;
>
> d) formulate recommended actions for the consideration of the Commissioner.

The attached final paper would not have become a reality without the dedication and perseverence of the group members. Specifically, I would like acknowledge the contributions of:

Lavinia Crane	Carol Matusicky
Sandra Griffin	Andrew Mcnab
Mavis Holm	Elaine McLeod

As a group, the committee members would like to express their appreciation for the opportunity to present their views to the Royal Commission on Education, and to assist the Commissioner in his work on behalf of the learners of British Columbia.

Finally, I would like to thank the Commission staff for their efforts, and Stan Garrod for his editorial support.

Respectfully Submitted

Terry McBurney
Chairman
JTM:sg

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Executive Summary

Where the Legacy Begins

The members of the Royal Commission's Working Group on Early Childhood Education directed their efforts, analysis, and recommendations toward the question: "How do the experiences and influences acting on the child prior to entering school affect future performance in school and adult life?" In exploring this issue, the group focussed on the potential role that the school system, in conjunction with other social service agencies, could play in ensuring the quality early developmental influences and experiences for all children living in British Columbia.

For purposes of analysis and discussion, pre-school experiences and influences were divided into two categories:

Pre- and peri-natal factors

Experiences and influences between birth and kindergarten

In developing the recommendations summarized below, the members of the working group on early childhood education have attempted to identify areas of cost-effective investment of social capital which, if implemented effectively, will have tremendous downstream benefits for the province's system of education and its economy and society as a whole.

Recommendations

1. The school system recognize the value of the pre-school experiences and those who care for young children and use all opportunities possible within the school curriculum and activities to promote family strengths and practices which will help children fulfill and prepare for future parenting and child caring roles:
a) offering a comprehensive health curriculum, mandated at all grade levels
b) integrating early childhood and prevention issues into the curriculum at both the elementary and secondary levels.

2. The school system recognize that the personal qualities and professional training of persons working with young children, and the care environments they create, have a profound effect on those children by:
a) providing opportunities for early childhood educators and caregivers to share with K-12 teachers in continuing education opportunities whenever possible and when the subject matter is relevant to both groups
b) allowing early childhood educators to access resource material used by school staff for professional development
c) encouraging career counsellors and all teachers to recognize the importance of early childhood education as a career opportunity for interested students.

3. The province of British Columbia set and maintain high professional standards for the selection, training, supervision, and evaluation of those placed in the role of care-givers and educators of the young child.

4. Within current school buildings, where possible, and in all new school construction, space be provided within school buildings for an early childhood centre to be operated independently of school administration by a non-profit organization or agency—such a facility would provide:
a) parents with greater choice in selecting an alternate type of setting to other early childhood care facilities
b) a facility where kindergarten children attending the school part time may attend on the same site if unable to return

home
c) better articulation between preschool and school facilities and staff
d) an opportunity for school students to observe growth and development of children
e) an information resource centre for parents, family day- care providers, group day-care staff and community members.

5. The Ministries of Education, Health, Social Services and Housing, and other relevant Ministries make a commitment to plan and work together at both the central and local level so that:
a) children may benefit from the policies, programs, and services of each; and
b) local planning and delivery of services be coordinated by a responsible group representing schools, health, social services, early childhood educators, and the community.

6. The school system and the Ministry of Education encourage and support strong effective health and screening programs for the early identification and treatment of health and social problems which will affect a child's ability to achieve and develop in school.

7. All parties involved in early childhood services initiate a coordinated program for public awareness regarding early childhood education.

8. A systematic model for program evaluation be developed to ensure that early childhood services are delivered with optimal educational/developmental and economic effectiveness.

Where The Legacy Begins

Preamble

Children are our most valuable possession, our most promising human resource, and the future of our country. Their emotional well-being, their physical growth and development and their education must be our highest priorities as a society.

> *Fifty percent of all the factors that determine intellectual functioning are formulated by the age of four and we would expect the variation in the environment to have relatively little effect on the I.Q. after the age of eight, but we would expect the greatest effect between the ages of about one and five.*
> *(Bloom, 1968)*

The earliest years of a child's life and growth are critical to the process of development and the building of future competencies. Research has demonstrated that the years between birth and age five are critical to the healthy growth and development of children. Events during those first five years of life leave a deep imprint on the child's personality, initiate basic character traits, and set patterns of behavior which will shape future experiences and affect future success in school and adult life.

For these reasons, the question: "What happens to British Columbia children before they enter the school system?" is of fundamental importance to the current deliberations of the Royal Commission on Education. In our opinion, there is no question that the investment in the early childhood years will produce tremendous benefits in future years, both for those individuals as they progress through school toward adulthood and for society as a whole. This investment must ensure the very best possible educational, health, social and emotional support during the critical developmental years of early childhood.

The Changing Family

Children develop within the context of a family. The Vanier Institute defines family as "the principal means through which we care for one another; the primary unit of learning, education and socialization; a source of emotional sustenance and support; and a significant unit of both economic production and consumption."

The last thirty years have borne witness to significant social and economic change in the family and no longer is the "traditional family" of mother in the home and father in the labour force a reality for a majority of Canadians:

> *Today the "traditional" male-supported family is in the distinct minority, representing only 16 percent of families as opposed to 65 percent in 1961. Many other family forms, such as one-parent families, childless couples and couples with children where both parents are employed, are much more common. (CACSW, 1986, p.4)*

There are a number of underlying causes for this change. Labour market and urbanization forces have affected family by encouraging "high physical mobility" (Armitage, 1978, p.371). There is an indication that the mobility of the modern labour force means families are often separated from the extended family (Portal-Foster & Sherman, 1968), a trend which began with the Industrial Revolution and has not abated in the ensuing years as indicated in the following statement:

> *Families today function in isolation. Recent social, economic and demographic changes have, in large part, contributed to the demise of the extended family. In the process of adapting to new societal and economic pressures which often re-*

quire multiplemoves, families lose access to the experience and wisdom of their elders and the support systems . . . on which they could once depend.
(Zigler & Finn, 1981)

Commenting insightfully on the changing nature of the North American family, the late anthropologist Margaret Mead stated that ". . . we now expect a family to achieve alone what no other society has ever expected an individual family to accomplish unaided. In effect, we call upon the individual family to do what a whole clan used to do."

Additionally, significant economic shifts have resulted in an increased number of families in which both parents must work. There has been an increasing need for wives and mothers to join the labour force in an effort to maintain a 'decent' standard of living for the family. In 1979, the National Council on Welfare estimated that there would be a 51% increase in the number of families caught below Canada's poverty level in two-parent working families if the wife had no earnings. In 1985, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women put the figure at 61%.

The number of single parent families in B.C. continues to grow (60,200 in 1976 and 96,645 in 1986); the majority of these families are headed by mothers. Today, one in five families is headed by a single parent and the majority of them are poor (63.6% as opposed to 14.4% for two-parent families). Statistics gathered for the Special Committee on Child Care (1987:150) indicated that 34.9% of single parent family incomes were "below Statistics Canada Poverty Line," compared with 6.6% for two-income families.

These changes have had significant impact on the family. In 1984, 64% of women with children in Canada were in the labour force, a substantial increase from the 20% figure for 1971 (Statistics Canada, 1984). Contrary to popular perception, of all the mothers in the labour force with children under the age of three, 69% were employed full-time (Townsend, 1986). Further, it is highly significant that the most rapid growth in labour force participation has taken place among mothers of young children, since these are the children for whom the developmental consequences are greatest (Ruopp and Travers, 1982:77).

Because of these changes in family structure and labour force participation, it is a contemporary social reality in British Columbia that a significant majority of children under the age of five spend at least a portion of their day being cared for in a non-familial setting.

While the average family composition and working patterns of families have shifted considerably in recent decades, a major concern and primary responsibility of the family remains unchanged, however. British Columbians still seek to provide children, our future generations, with the social, emotional, intellectual and physical care they require to maximize their potentials as fully functioning, competent contributors to our society. It is readily apparent that the social and economic changes described above have made this task exceedingly more complex and demanding for families today.

The Needs of the Child

Among the needs that must be met if a child is to develop in a healthy and successful way are:

1. Security: developed through the provision of food and a physically safe and emotionally supportive environment;

2. Acceptance of Self: of one's own uniqueness and individuality;

3. Achievement: opportunity to successfully accomplish tasks or activities in order to develop a sense of self worth and responsible independence;

4. Self-confidence: the sense of self-esteem that comes with accomplishment, acceptance and the feeling of being valued;

5. Love and affection: the need of every child to know that he/she is loveable, valued and secure;

6. Trust: built on a sense of security, give each child a comfortable and secure sense in his/her social environment;

7. Independence and freedom: a developing feeling that the child has measure of control over his/her surroundings and the freedom and space to explore, to make mistakes and to learn from them;

8. Creativity: the use of the imagination to foster creative expression despite social pressures to conform.

Research has indicated that the health of children has significant developmental consequences and that many of the negative early childhood experiences that result in dysfunctional conditions, such as learning disabilities, affecting school performance are preventable.

Sound pre- and peri-natal health education programs combined with quality early childhood care are critical to the prevention of many forms of future dysfunction in school children. Prevention of dysfunction, wherever possible, is essential if all children are to have the opportunity to achieve in school and if demand for special education services in the school system is to be reduced. An investment in improved care during the earliest years of life will reap significant benefits both in human terms and in real savings to taxpayers over the years to follow.

Pre/Perinatal Care and Education: A Benefit Cost Analysis

Many learning disabilities and other dysfunctional conditions that impact upon our school children and those who teach them have their origins prior to birth or in the first weeks and months of the child's life. It is estimated that 30% of all handicapped children of school age became handicapped during the last six months of pregnancy , delivery or the first week of life.

This fact has several important implications for the British Columbia school system, which in 1987 spent more than $200 million on special education services and programs.

Medical research has demonstrated conclusively that low birth weight babies and babies born to mothers who smoke, use drugs or alcohol, or suffer from malnutrition are significantly more likely to have neurological impairments or other dysfunctional conditions that affect their school experience and success in later life than are babies born to mothers who follow healthy pre- and peri-natal care practices. It is an unfortunate fact of contemporary life that many of these children are born to young mothers and that conception occurs either while the mother is still in school or shortly after school-leaving.

This fact serves to highlight the important role that British Columbia schools can play in reducing the number of children with conditions that impair their capacity for learning by educating students fully about healthier pre- and peri-natal l experiences. The costs of implementing such programs are slight and the benefits enormous, in both social and fiscal terms.

Studies in Europe have shown that the costs to society in terms of educational and other support services, combined with reduced earning power, of neurologically impaired children are ten times as great as the investment required to offer preventative educational and public health programs.

The European experience is informative, too, in revealing that those nations such as Sweden and Finland which are widely regarded as having the most effective family life education programs have significantly fewer neurologically impaired children.

Nation-wide studies show that young women in Canada are among the least fit and healthy members of our population. British studies have shown that 10% of young women have their first baby within four years of leaving school and more than 40% are born within eight years of school-leaving. Schools are often the last social service agency to

be in touch with the young woman prior to pregnancy and, therefore, may be deemed to have a special responsibility for the health of the next generation they serve.

No girl or boy in British Columbia should leave school without this knowledge. If a health or family life teacher prevents the birth of only one severely handicapped child, the saving to the British Columbia economy in general, and the school system in particular, will be greater than the cost of that teacher's salary for a lifetime.

The Benefits of Early Intervention

The pre-school phase of a child's life is critically formative with regard to eventual performance in K-12 schooling and to the ultimate quality of life that child will enjoy as an adult. The quality of early childhood experiences is a key determinant of a child's intellectual development, social skills and self-esteem. Increasingly, many of these experiences are taking place in day-care centres and other out-of-family settings in addition to the family home.

The *Report of the Task Force on Child Care* indicates that slightly less than half of children born in the 1980s will be cared for at home by their mother (a small percentage are cared for by their father), perhaps attending a part-time play group and nursery school before entering school. Another one-third, or more, will participate in a full-day, year-round child care arrangement. This will likely take the form of care in a neighbourhood home from mothers with young children or older women with grown families; a minority of children have access to care that is officially regulated or supervised. The remainder, about 20%, have mothers who work part-time, and their experience is likely to resemble one or both of the aforementioned scenarios.

Longitudinal studies of child development and education have clearly demonstrated the importance of quality developmental experiences during the first formative years. While this is true for all children, the benefits of effective screening and quality early intervention are particularly significant for disadvantaged children. These facts, combined with the data on early childhood experiences cited above, give rise to a growing concern over the need to ensure quality early child care experiences in Canada:

Perhaps no single issue related to child care is as complex and controversial as the issue of quality, nor as critical to the well-being and future development of Canada's children. Parents, providers, and government are deeply concerned about this issue and professionals and researchers are expending considerable effort studying factors that contribute to differences in quality and the effects of those differences on care-givers and children (Lero and Kyle, 1985:88).

In attempting to determine the appropriateness of care type(s) that policy should support or encourage, the issue of quality becomes of paramount importance.

The impact of quality early childhood care programs has been well-documented. A study in Ypsilanti, Michigan, followed the school and young adult lives of a group of "disadvantaged" children from the time they were three or four until they were 19. Those who attended pre-school programs were more motivated and got more out of education; were more likely to graduate from high school and were less likely to require special education services; and, were less likely to get in trouble with the law or require social service agency interventions. The University of Western Ontario's Pre-school Project, since the 1970s, has studied the impact of early childhood education on disadvantaged children and reports significant gains on all measures for children receiving these interventions.

These findings indicate that disadvantaged children placed in quality early childhood programs receive the kind of care that brings personal benefits for them as individuals and to society as a whole over many years. The costs of such early interventions for children up to five years of age would appear to be more than made up for by the benefits of reduced special education and social welfare service demands over a much longer period of time.

A Cost-Effective Service Delivery Model

British Columbia taxpayers have already spent many millions of dollars on capital investments for school sites and school facilities. Fuller utilization of these sites and facilities for educational pre-school and before- and after-school care programs would facilitate articulation of early childhood and schooling in a highly cost-effective way.

American child-care pioneer Ed Zigler, one of the founders of Project Head Start, is a strong advocate of fuller use of existing school facilities to deliver child care services. In a recent article (Trotter, 1987), Zigler describes his view of a cost effective child care delivery system:

> *. . . we must convince the nation that when a family selects a child-care centre, they are not simply buying a service that allows them to work. They are buying an environment that determines, in large part, the development of their children . . . 'child care is a day- in-day-out, year-in-year-out phenomenon for a child.'*

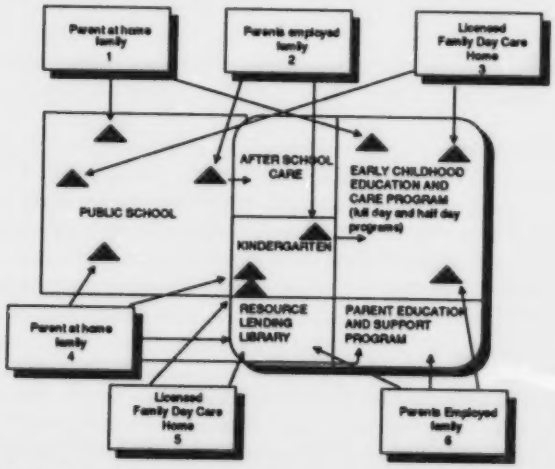
Building a whole new system of delivery for quality day care in North America would be prohibitively expensive, Zigler argues. Instead, the solution lies in using existing school facilities in a more thorough manner to offer an expanded range of child-centred services:

> *Some people are still arguing for the Swedish model—a day-care center on every corner; the government buys it and you go use it. That's unrealistic . . . but there is an affordable alternative. . . . I think we have to . . . . change the school system. We have to open schools earlier in the morning, keep them open later in the afternoon and during summer. . . .*

Don't think of school as an institution, Zigler says. Think of it as a building that has already been paid for, one that is owned by tax-paying mothers and fathers who need day-care for their children. Part of the school building would be for teaching and part of it would be for day-care and supervision. This kind of system, Zigler says, could provide working parents with good developmental child-care services.

The full service neighbourhood school, shown in the diagram below, shows how cost effective child care and pre-school programs could be offered and coordinated through existing schools in British Columbia.

Figure 1. Hub Model: Full Service Neighbourhood School


Parent at home family 1
Parents employed family 2
Licensed Family Day Care Home 3
AFTER SCHOOL CARE
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE PROGRAM (full day and half day programs)
PUBLIC SCHOOL
KINDERGARTEN
RESOURCE LENDING LIBRARY
PARENT EDUCATION AND SUPPORT PROGRAM
Parent at home family 4
Licensed Family Day Care Home 5
Parents Employed family 6

1. Has children >6 in school and child <5 in half-day preschool program.
2. Has child >6 in school who attends after-school and kindergarten child who attends day-care program half day.
3. Family day-care provider who cares for school-age child and cares for children <5 who attend preschool half day.
4. Has children >6 in school and children <5 who attend preschool half day; parent uses resource library and attends parent education.
5. Family day-care provider who cares for kindergarten age child and children <5; provides e.c.e program; uses resource library.
6. Has children <5 who attend day care program full-time; parent uses resource library and attends parent education courses in evening.

Benefits to the Child

The greatest benefit to the child of the full service neighbourhood school is the opportunity to remain in the home community during pre-school and school-age years. Continuity of school and care-giving environments ensures children have appropriate opportunities to build social networks accessible after school/day-care hours, on weekends, and during holidays. Here, children can meet care-givers and educators, both before ìchildren attend specific programs and after they have graduated to other programs within the facility. A pre-school age child, for example, would become familiar with kindergarten and grade school teachers before entering school. Additionally, in this era of small families and only children, every child would have the opportunity to meet and socialize with a variety of children of different ages and social backgrounds.

For the kindergarten-age child of working parents, the confusion and stress of having to adjust to two different systems and environments resulting from a day divided between kindergarten and a geographically removed day-care location is considerably lessened through the full service school. Here, the child would remain in a familiar setting and the coordination/liaison between the kindergarten teacher and the day-care provider will create the continuity between the two environments the child needs.

For school-age children, the greatest benefit comes from ready access to before and after school care. These children are not forced to walk or take a bus to another facility/program at the end of a busy school day or to return to an empty house where they remain unsupervised until a parent returns home from work.

Benefits to Parents

The most important benefit to parents of such a facility is the ready availability of and access to a variety of affordable quality programs which support both parents who remain at home and those parents who must or choose to work outside the home. Here, parents have the choice of several programs, such as centre-based day care, home-based care, enriched pre-school environment, on a full- or part-time basis, which can be tailored to best suit the needs of the child(ren) and the family. As well, because, these programs are all located in the home neighbourhood, parents have a greater chance to meet and socialize, to provide mutual support, and to exchange experience and expertise with each other.

Benefits to Care-givers and Teachers

In addition to the opportunities for coordination and liaison noted above, teachers and child-care professionals would benefit from greater access to a wide range of support services. There would be enhanced professional development opportunities, both formally and informally in the school-based facility. A specific benefit to Early Childhood Educators would be the enhanced professional status and improved working conditions they would enjoy in the full service facility as, at present, poor working conditions and low status drive many talented and competent individuals out of the field.

Health care and social service professionals would benefit from better access to the children they serve and, with the assistance of teachers and care-givers, would be in a better position to effect early identification and remediation of potentially dysfunctional conditions.

Administrative benefits, too, could result from the housing of a wide range of services in a single neighbourhood facility. It is, however, beyond the scope of the working group's mandate to address specific administrative arrangements for such a coordinated facility.

Benefits to the Taxpayers

More efficient use of public buildings already funded through tax dollars would be an important benefit resulting from

the full service neighbourhood school. Service provision would become more cost effective through access to adequate space and quality facilities. Above all, the long-term benefits of enhanced care-giving environments and better coordination of child-care, educational and health services would benefit the public through reduced special educational and social service costs throughout the child's school years and adult life.

Concluding Note

According to the authors of the "Public School Early Childhood Study," the policy challenge of the future will be the creation of enough programs to satisfy the combined needs for early childhood programs for all families, regardless of income. Their study concludes that the public school system has a major role to play in meeting this challenge. In British Columbia, the school system and all other social service agencies have a major role to play in meeting this challenge, which, if met successfully, will have tremendous downstream benefits for the province's system of education and its economy and society as a whole.

Recommendations

The pre-school phase of a child's life is vitally formative with regard to eventual performance in K-12 schooling and to the ultimate quality of life that the child will enjoy as an adult. The quality of family and care experience is a key determinant of a child's intellectual development, social skills and self-esteem.

It is recommended that:

1. The school system recognize the value of the pre-school experiences and those who care for young children and use all opportunities possible within the school curriculum and activities to promote family strengths and practices which will help children fulfill and prepare for future parenting and child caring roles by:
a) offering a comprehensive health curriculum, mandated at all grade levels
b) integrating early childhood and prevention issues into the curriculum at both the elementary and secondary levels.

Traditional family structures have changed and many children are cared for outside of the family home during their formative years. To ensure consistently high quality early childhood experiences, all of which affect school performance, it is recommended that:

2. The school system recognize that the personal qualities and professional training of persons working with young children, and the care environments they create, have a profound effect on those children by:
a) providing opportunities for early childhood educators and caregivers to share with K-12 teachers in continuing education opportunities whenever possible and when the subject matter is relevant to both groups
b) allowing early childhood educators to access resource material used by school staff for professional development
c) encouraging career counsellors and all teachers to recognize the importance of early childhood education as a career opportunity for interested students.

The major portion of the cost of a significant investment for quality pre-school/early childhood programs would be the human resources needed to provide the level of professionalism that such programs should offer. Personal qualities and professional qualifications of persons working with preschool children have a profound effect on the development of the children in their care as well as the quality of the environment in which the child develops.

It is recommended that:

3. The province of British Columbia set and maintain high professional standards for the selection, training, supervision, and evaluation of those placed in the role of care-givers and educators of the young child.

Taxpayers have already spent many millions of dollars on capital investments for school sites and facilities located in each community in the province. Utilization of existing school facilities for early childhood programs would facilitate co- ordination of early childhood and K-12 educational programs, aid diagnosis and remediation of dysfunctional conditions and provide a wide range of social benefits to families in a highly cost- effective manner.

It is recommended that:

4. Within current school buildings, where possible, and in all new school construction, space be provided within school buildings for an early childhood centre to be operated independently of school administration by a non-profit organization or agency—such a facility would provide:
a) parents with greater choice in selecting an alternate type of setting to other early childhood care facilities
b) a facility where kindergarten children attending the school part time may attend on the same site if unable to return home
c) better articulation between pre-school and school facilities and staff
d) an opportunity for school students to observe growth and development of children
e) an information resource centre for parents, family day-care providers, group day-care staff and community members.

Quality early childhood educational programs and services must be available on an equitable basis throughout British Columbia, regardless of geographic location, economic status or cultural background of the family.

It is recommended that:

5. The Ministries of Education, Health, Social Services and Housing, and other relevant Ministries make a commitment to plan and work together at both the central and local level so that:
a) children may benefit from the policies, programs, and services of each; and
b) local planning and delivery of services be coordinated by a responsible group representing schools, health, social services, early childhood educators, and the community.

Prenatal and perinatal health education combined with quality early childhood care are critical to the prevention of many types of future dysfunction in school children. Investment during those years will reap benefits in human terms and in real savings to the taxpayer in future years. Early childhood programs have the potential to support early screening programs, diagnosis, and remediation of potentially dysfunctional conditions. Prevention of dysfunction wherever possible is essential if children are to have the opportunity to achieve in school and if the demand for specialist intervenors within the school system are to be decreased.

It is recommended that:

6. The school system and the Ministry of Education encourage and support strong effective health and screening programs for the early identification and treatment of health and social problems which will affect a child's ability to achieve and develop in school.

The value of families and their children, the significant impact of early childhood experience, and the importance of those who work with young children need to be emphasized and communicated throughout British Columbia.

It is recommended that:

7. All parties involved in early childhood services initiate a coordinated program for public awareness regarding early childhood education.

Once high risk individuals, groups and communities have been identified, goals should be set for pre-school service delivery programs and means of measuring outcomes be established in order to assure accountability of this service.

It is recommended that:

8. *A systematic model for program evaluation be developed to ensure that early childhood services are delivered with optimal educational/ developmental and economic effectiveness.*

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Parents In Education

Report Of The Working Group On Parents' Role: Rights And Responsibilities

April 1988

April 22, 1988

Mr. Barry M. Sullivan, Q.C.
Commissioner
Royal Commission on Education
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Mr. Commissioner:

I am pleased to submit the technical paper of the Royal Commission's Working Group on the Parents' Role: Rights and Responsibilities, pursuant to the assigned mandate:

> to develop for the Commissioner a technical paper which would provide an informed position on issues related to the critical issue of parental participation in education.
>
> a) identify issues in the area of statutory and other rights and appropriate roles and responsibilities for parents at the school and school district levels;
>
> b) priorize the issues which can be addressed effectively within the time frame of the Royal Commission;
>
> c) analyze the key issues to establish a foundation for recommendations;
>
> d) formulate recommended actions for the consideration of the Commissioner.

The attached final paper would not have become a reality without the dedication and perseverence of the group members. Specifically, I would like acknowledge the contributions of:

Helen Casher	Helen Kerr
Don Davis	Angele Segger
Lesley Harris	Carol Tiessen
Joyce Hodge	Rosemary Wakefield
Maxine Wilson	

As a group, the committee members would like to express their appreciation for the opportunity to present their views to the Royal Commission on Education, and to assist the Commissioner in his work on behalf of the learners of British Columbia.

Finally, I would like to thank the Commission staff for their efforts, and Stan Garrod for his editorial support.

Respectfully Submitted

Terry McBurney
Chairman
JTM:sg

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Executive Summary

Parents in Education

The members of the Royal Commission's Working Group on Parents' Roles: Rights and Responsibilities directed their comments and recommendations toward two aspects of the education system: "What meaningful and appropriate role can parents play in the education of their children?" and "What rights and responsibilities does that parent role in education carry with it?"

Four specific areas of discussion were identified for elaboration in the full paper:

1. Communication between school systems and parents
2. Parental Involvement in the School System
3. Parents as advocates for their children's education
4. The need to provide due process where parents have concerns

Recommendations

Communication

Initiatives at the provincial, school district and school levels should be directed toward encouraging and fostering parental involvement through more effective communication among all the partners in education—parents, educators, and students.

Measures which will contribute to significant improvement in *communication* include:

Concrete support for teachers to communicate directly with parents, including such things as release time or use of non-instructional days for school-to-home communication.

Development and use of handbooks, audio-visual material and other packages to inform parents about the programs, services and operations of schools and school districts.

- Provision of translation services, home-school workers and other resources to overcome the communication barriers which exist between schools and homes, particularly where families outside the dominant culture are involved, or in the case of other home situations with special needs.
- Teacher and administrator education/in-service programs to develop an understanding of the need for effective communication with parents, to provide skills training in interpersonal communication with parents and community members, as well as shared/participatory decision-making.

Involvement and Participation

Structures should be established at the provincial, school district and school levels to ensure that parents are genuinely involved in advising educators and policy makers—local and provincial—in matters related to educational programs, services, and operations.

Measures which will contribute to significant improvement in the extent of *parental* involvement and participation include:

- Provincial intitiative(s) to develop a clear policy position regarding the extent and nature of parental participation, such as guidelines for use of volunteers, fund-raising projects, and/or relationships with school boards, to name just a few examples.
- Participation in committees at the provincial, school district, and school levels which review, revise, and develop curriculum.
- Participation in committees at the provincial, school district and school levels which relate to school effectiveness, including assessment and evaluation of programs and personnel, selection of school-based administrators, and definition of the nature and extent of parent involvement in the above.
- Participation in the identification, planning, and implementation of support services for the community which are offered through the school system.
- Participation in committees at the provincial and school district levels to review, on a continuing basis, a wide range of administrative and operational matters, such as transportation, school safety, or community use of schools.
- Teacher and administrator education and in-service programs must address the need for genuine parental involvement in significant areas.
- Classroom and school outreach activities should be designed to inform, involve, and facilitate education of parents, family members, and other people important to the home and community living situation of the students.
- Provincial leadership be taken to foster and encourage parental involvement through provision of adequate funding for education.

Advocacy Provisions

Mechanisms should be established for defining the roles and relationships among students, parents, and educators to set up processes which enable advocacy on behalf of students and parents at the provincial, district, and school levels.

Measures which will contribute to significant improvements in effecting advocacy mechanisms include:

- Provincial guidelines (including possible revisions to the *School Act* and Regulations), district policies, procedures, and by-laws must ensure that provisions are made for parents to advocate at all levels on behalf of children.

Due Process Provisions

Mechanisms for the resolution of conflict should be established and clearly delineated at the provincial, district and school levels.

Measures which will contribute to effecting improvements in due process provisions include:

- Due process mechanisms should provide for an appeal process, such as some form of third party intervention when parental concerns cannot be resolved through normal communication channels, through a district-level ombudsman, parent/educator district appeal committees, or other such mechanisms.

Parents in Education

Introduction

In affirming that the over-all purpose of education is to bring each child, through personal and social growth experiences, to the maximum of his/her potential, it is essential that the key role of parents in influencing formal and informal learning experiences be recognized. It is this paramount role which underscores the need for meaningful parental involvement in children's schooling and education.

This paper examines the means by which the role of parents can be recognized by other partners in education. The identification and analysis of issues regarding parent involvement in education, and the recommendations presented in this paper to the Royal Commission on Education, clearly reflect the Commission's Terms of Reference:

> *In doing so, we begin from a position of fundamental respect for the dignity and potential of every single British Columbian. We recognize too, the unique natural relationship between parent and child and the vital role which parents do play in the education of their children. (Royal Commission on Education, "Schedule, Education in B.C. Schools. Enquiry Terms of Reference").*

Statements of Belief

Several fundamental beliefs held by members of the Working Group on Parents in Education have served to guide our analysis and shape our recommendations:

1. Learning is an individual experience: the unique nature of each individual is seen in his/her needs, interests and learning style. All systems designed to deliver educational services to British Columbia's children and youth are facing increasing challenges arising from our diverse population, a factor which accentuates the need to provide for a wide range of needs. It is becoming increasingly apparent that education is a life-long process and that the influences on the learner extend well beyond the classroom and school experience.

2. The parent is key to the child's developing vision of reality. The well-documented work of Bloom and others in formulating the "critical years" hypothesis underscores the vital contribution which parents make—regardless of the focus, nature, or extent of that influence—before the child enters the formal schooling system. Increasingly complex and diverse societal phenomena, such as multicultural considerations, changing lifestyle patterns, and the impact of mass media, highlight the essential role of parents as equal and responsible partners in the learning process. The realization that the formalized schooling system appears to be overwhelmed by a perception that it must meet all the needs of all children emphasizes the necessity for recognizing parents as partners in education.

3. The institution of the school/educational system is a societal response to the need to prepare the youth of today for their role as the adults of tomorrow. Because this preparatory experience in schools and school systems is delivered through an essentially bureaucratic structure, the institution is often seen as self-serving rather than responding to the needs of children and parents.

4. A significant and fundamental change must occur if there is to be a truly "parent-involved" system of education. The system must place a high value on openness, mutual respect, flexibility, responsiveness, and involvement. It must be attuned more closely to the following basic attributes: accessibility,

relevance, diversity, achievement, and accountability.
Accessibility: Schools must be equally accessible to all.
Relevance: Our schools must focus on the development of individuals to their fullest potential as well as take into consideration the interests of students and the demands of society.
Diversity: Our schools should tolerate, accept, respect and provide for the needs of adiverse population.
Achievement/Accountability: Parents must have a role in shaping the learning enterprise.

5. We believe strongly that parents have a right to expect adequate funding of the education system. Funding must be the responsibility of government through a comprehensive taxation structure encompassing all sectors of the economy. Lack of adequate funding is a barrier to meaningful parental involvement as parents' energies are directed to limited, specific activities such as fund-raising, rather than activities which enrich learning more directly.

6. We feel that reluctance toward more parent involvement may be attributed to those whose task it is to deliver education programs in today's highly structured and perhaps over-organized schooling system. The entire range of human foibles probably can be causal factors in creating this attitudinal problem. Territorial biases and personality conflicts exist in all situations. Access through direct involvement and open communication between home and school is regarded as a fundamental right for parents who should be treated as equal and responsible partners in education. Structures should be implemented to facilitate that involvement.

These statements of belief underscore our conviction that collaborative efforts of parents and educators can forge an alliance that, by definition, is stronger than each partner acting in isolation, thus creating synergy. "In organizations, the interaction of individual ideas can spark ideas which are greater than the sum of the individual ideas." (B. Chandler, Superintendent, Greater Victoria School District. October 22, 1986. "School-Initiated Improvement: A People Process," pp. 13-14.) In essence, we believe that parent-teacher cooperation, and mutual understanding between a child's home and school, will result in a superior learning environment for that child.

Why Parents In Education?

Parents should be productively involved at the school, school district, and provincial levels. Three main arguments can be advanced for encouraging meaningful involvement:

1. The educational argument is based on mounting evidence that parent involvement has positive effects on students. Research undertaken in the United States by Ira Gordon concludes that ". . . all forms of parent involvement help . . . the more comprehensive the involvement and the longer it lasts, the more effective it will be."

There is a great, untapped, potential for parents to become a natural extension of the classroom; for parents to become co-learners with their children; for theories learned at school to be tested and applied in low-risk surroundings; and for learning to go beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge to changes in behaviour. This potential can be realised where learning activities are published in the form of short handbooks and where the community is more involved than in the past in shaping curriculum.

Applying what is taught in school to non-school settings adds a new dimension to teaching and learning. The challenge of breaking down the we/they concept is to create a learning bridge between the home and the classroom. This is essential to help other family members to understand and reinforce what the school curriculum seeks to accomplish.

Schools must recognize that the family is vital and critical in the education of children. Family members' views and inputs into curriculum and classroom experience can be extremely productive, particularly in this age of cultural and linguistic diversity. There have been many successful projects involving parents as partners in achieving learning ob-

jectives in British Columbia, including fire safety, nutrition education, and family life education. Other examples include the Health Education Curriculum Guide in Ohio and Project Prevention in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.

2. The **parents' rights** argument centres on two principles:
   (1) Parents are entitled to full and accurate information about the system's goals for formalized instruction, their child's progress in achieving those goals, and about all policy/procedural features of their school and school district; and,
   (2) parents have a right to exercise available options based on that information, and to advocate change where necessary.

3. The **survival** argument relates to the need for an advocacy role by parents, a voice in support of a system which addresses individual and societal needs. Support which enjoys a broad community base is necessary to ensure the continued existence of structured schooling.

Areas Of Impact

Parents can have an impact at all levels of the school system and in a wide range of education-related areas. Among the areas in which we feel that parents can play a significant role are:

1. Assistants in the Educational Process

Parents are not only guardians of their children's welfare, they are knowledgeable constituents of their community. Dr. James Cutt, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria, categorizes four general areas of parent-teacher cooperation, ". . . the four general roles may be described as follows: first, observers; second, assistants; third, consultant/advisors; and finally, participants in decision-making." (Cutt,1985:6).

Dr. Cutt indicates that the role of observer and assistant is best served by individual parents, while collective action as consultant/advisors and participants in decision-making is best served at school, district and provincial levels by parent groups and committees. Specific school level involvement can be seen for parents in respect to school philosophy and school climate, programs, policy, courses, rules and regulations, multicultural programs, and a wide range of other topics. We would like to stress the importance, and the possibilities, of parent-teacher cooperation in the second area as defined by Dr. Cutt, that of assistant in educational activities. Though this area is a sensitve one and requires carefully thought-out guidelines—especially at school and district levels—it is also the area with the greatest potential for integrating parents and community in the school.

Community schools and schools which already have a cooperative philosophy are models for the creative and effective use of volunteers. Their methods, successes and experience can be adapted to help the regular system tap this resource to benefit their children. An "open door" will enrich and enhance the classroom environment.

Parents who have been volunteers, incidentally, are often those who develop the commitment and the knowledge base to continue their involvement in group functions as consultant-advisors or as participants in decision-making.

2. Determination of Goals and Objectives

Parents have a legitimate and shared responsibility with educators in determining the goals and objectives for learning, for curriculum development and for the accountability phase of the curriculum cycle. This includes direct involvement in identifying what is to be taught and why it is to be taught.

Many excellent channels for parent input into curriculum either exist currently or were operational in the past. The Provincial Advisory Committees on Elementary and Secondary Curriculum were broadly-based groups which took a

comprehensive look at the total curriculum and which appeared to achieve a reasonable balance between general learning and the requests of special interest groups. Also at the provincial level, the Provincial Learning Assessment Program continues to make extensive use of parents on its interpretation panels. Many school districts, too, have developed successful models for the active participation of parents in special curriculum areas such as French Immersion, Health and Safety, and Family Life Education.

3. Program Evaluation

The unique role of parents dictates that they be continually involved in evaluation processes to ensure that the system remain responsive to the on-going and changing needs of learners. Parents can participate in establishing program evaluation criteria by identifying goals and objectives to be assessed; they can participate in student evaluation criteria by identifying expectations for level of performance; and, they can relate to personnel evaluation criteria by identifying components of job descriptions.

Educational evaluation has always been an emotionally charged issue, primarily because of the complexity of measurement and the subjectivity involved in most evaluation activities. Parents have a contribution to make in regard to expectations for programs, pupils, and personnel. Most effective avenues of parental input in this area are through participation on school- and district-level committees which focus on setting criteria and suggesting means of measurement. Many aspects of evaluation are properly the jurisdiction of professional educators; however, the satisfaction of the clients, both parents and students, must weigh heavily in evaluation and in shaping the direction of the schooling system.

4. School System Management

The responsibility for the management of the schooling system cannot be delegated if we are to hold those in charge accountable. However, parent and student involvement is essential to ensure "good" management. Managerial and administrative areas are vulnerable to "territorial" problems. Parental concerns in this area tend to relate to the adequacy and appropriateness of school or system provision of services, some of which, such as transportation of students, closed boundaries, grade configuration, traffic safety, program location, smoking, or budget considerations, to name just a few, may or may not be ancillary to the curriculum and instruction in the school.

Procedures for dealing with school-related problems and concerns require a major streamlining. Special meetings of school boards or district committees can provide a vehicle for focussing on problems in a particular area. A committee or group specifically designated to provide an appeal mechanism or due process may be another means. Regular meetings serve:

1) a liaison function between school/district administration and parent representatives, and

2) an educational function to encourage each party to value the input of the other and recognize the benefits of such a partnership, have considerable potential for meaningful parental involvement.

5. Communication

Parent involvement can improve school/district communication programs: parents can become educators of other parents, serving both communication/information needs of parents and the school system. Parents who do not understand the complexities of the many aspects to an educational system may become unwitting barriers to effective involvement in the system, or may choose to remain uninvolved, and may in fact be unsupportive of the system. As Richard Lamm points out, "Most educators and parents have not received any training in shared decision making. Old patterns must be changed and new patterns developed" (Lamm,1986:212). Knowledge and appreciation of the dimensions of

the educational enterprise by parents and educators for the contribution that each lends to it, contributes to mutual respect and builds a foundation for positive working relationships.

Parents require ready access to basic information about school programs, learning activities and instructional resources. Lines of communication regarding these aspects of the education system must be open and facilitate a two- way flow of information between the school and the home. "The onus is on the teachers and principals to make the involvement of parents and students meaningful as well as being actively involved themselves." (Manitoba Teachers' Society, 1987:27) These roles will reflect the particular needs of its community. Parents can provide more localized information to the educational staff and are the major index for measuring community expectations.

Parent education, in the sense of better communication and better information, must make more effective use of school newsletters, telephone trees, parent-teacher group meetings, conferencing on pupil progress, shared parent/teacher professional development, and the use of all aspects of local media.

It is incumbent upon school boards and educators to ensure that all information is conveyed to parents in a readily understandable manner—a point which is particularly relevant to highly culturally diverse communities. Home/School workers serve a vital purpose in this communication process; however, for the programs to be effective, more personnel are needed.

Traditional times and locations for parent-involved meetings need to be re-examined in light of changing life styles and family patterns. School systems have not always recognized social changes, and have had difficulty in making appropriate provisions for dealing with changes such as single parent, dual income, English-as-a-Second-Language, and high mobility families. Release time for parents and teachers needs to be made available at convenient hours to accommodate these concerns.

Accessible locations should be considered for meetings with home-bound parents. As well, in special circumstances, school transportation services could be used to bring parents to such meetings.

Communication links many of the areas discussed above. Training or education programs for parents acting as assistants or participating in curriculum development, for example, require effective communication and close cooperation between the home, the school, governance structures, and the community. There should be concern for both content and process which recognizes both the capacity and commitment of parents.

6. Advocacy

Parents have the first and most direct interest in their child's development and are therefore more likely to ensure that the needs of the child are being met. "The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his education and guidance; that responsiblity lies in the first place with his parents." (*United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, Article 7 (1959)). A parent, therefore, has the right to act, to be an advocate, on behalf of the child in order to ensure that the best interests of the child are realized.

There are three basic levels of parental involvement in child advocacy in the education system: on behalf of individual children; on behalf of groups of children; and on behalf of the education system as a whole. From the right to speak to the needs of one's own child, a parent often moves on to work with like-minded parents on behalf of a group of children with respect to a particular issue such as integration of special needs children.

The role for parents as educational advocates is relatively untapped and has the potential for far-reaching, constant change. Parents must respect the rights of others to advocate. Therefore, they must listen, work cooperatively, and negotiate with respect for other viewpoints.

When views conflict, as occasionally they must, and when persuasion, education, and negotiation among affected parties fail to provide a mutually agreed upon solution, what then? A mediating mechanism must be available at all levels—

school, district, and Ministry—to see that the needs of the particular client are met while the conflicting interests of the various advocates are heard and recognized. Parents must be actively involved in the development of this process.

Concluding Comments

The bottom line for members of the Working Group on Parents' Roles: Rights and Responsibilities is our belief that parents want to be, need to be, and have a right to be productively and meaningfully involved in the process of educating their children. Such involvement, in our view, will not only enhance the quality of education that our children receive, but will also ensure improved communications between schools and the communities they serve, thus increasing both accountability of schools and parent support for our school system.

Recommendations

In the process of identifying many specific recommendations for the consideration of the Commissioner, the members of the Working Group concluded that the many operational suggestions to enhance the role of parents in education could be grouped into four major categories: (1) communication, (2) involvement and participation, (3) advocacy provisions, and (4) due process provisions.

Communication

It is recommended that:

> *Initiatives at the provincial, school district and school levels be directed toward encouraging and fostering parental involvement through more effective communication among all the partners in education—parents, educators, and students.*

Measures which will contribute to significant improvement in *communication* include:

Concrete support for teachers to communicate directly with parents, including such things as release time or use of non-instructional days for school-to-home communication.

- Development and use of handbooks, audio-visual material and other packages to inform parents about the programs, services and operations of schools and school districts.
- Provision of translation services, home-school workers and other resources to overcome the communication barriers which exist between schools and homes, particularly where families outside the dominant culture are involved, or in the case of other home situations with special needs.
- Teacher and administrator education/in-service programs to develop an understanding of the need for effective communication with parents, to provide skills training in interpersonal communication with parents and community members, as well as shared/participatory decision-making.

Involvement and Participation

It is recommended that:

> *Structures be established at the provincial, school district and school levels to ensure that parents are genuinely involved in advising educators and policy makers—local and provincial—in matters related to educational programs, services, and operations.*

Measures which will contribute to significant improvement in the extent of **parental involvement and participation** include:

- Provincial intitiative(s) to develop a clear policy position regarding the extent and nature of parental participation, such as guidelines for use of volunteers, fund-raising projects, and/or relationships with school boards, to name just a few examples.
- Participation in committees at the provincial, school district, and school levels which review, revise, and develop curriculum.
- Participation in committees at the provincial, school district and school levels which relate to school effectiveness, including assessment and evaluation of programs and personnel, selection of school-based administrators, and definition of the nature and extent of parent involvement in the above.
- Participation in the identification, planning, and implementation of support services for the community which are offered through the school system.
- Participation in committees at the provincial and school district levels to review, on a continuing basis, a wide range of administrative and operational matters, such as transportation, school safety, or community use of schools.
- Teacher and administrator education and in-service programs must address the need for genuine parental involvement in significant areas.
- Classroom and school outreach activities should be designed to inform, involve, and facilitate education of parents, family members, and other people important to the home and community living situation of the students.
- Provincial leadership be taken to foster and encourage parental involvement through provision of adequate funding for education.

Advocacy Provisions

It is recommended that:

> *Mechanisms be established for defining the roles and relationships among students, parents, and educators to set up processes which enable advocacy on behalf of students and parents at the provincial, district, and school levels.*

Measures which will contribute to significant improvements in effecting **advocacy** mechanisms include:

- Provincial guidelines (including possible revisions to the *School Act* and Regulations), district policies, procedures, and by-laws must ensure that provisions are made for parents to advocate at all levels on behalf of children.

Due Process Provisions

It is recommended that:

> *Mechanisms for the resolution of conflict be established and clearly delineated at the provincial, district and school levels.*

Measures which will contribute to effecting improvements in **due process** provisions include:

- Due process mechanisms should provide for an appeal process, such as some form of third party intervention when parental concerns cannot be resolved through normal communication channels, through a district-level ombudsman, parent/educator district appeal committees, or other such mechanisms.

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Building Bridges to the 21st Century: Report of the Working Group on Business and Education

April 1988

April, 1988.

Mr. Barry M. Sullivan, Q.C.
Commissioner
Royal Commission on Education
Vancouver, British Columbia

Dear Mr. Commissioner:

I am pleased to submit the technical paper of the Royal Commission's Working Group on Business and Education, pursuant to the assigned mandate:

1. to develop for the Commissioner a technical paper which will provide an informed position on issues relevant to the relationship between education and schooling and the world of work.
   a) to identify issues in the area of education, schooling, and working life;
   b) to priorize the issues which can be addressed effectively within the time frame of the Royal Commission;
   c) to analyze the key issues to establish a foundation for recommendations;
   d) to formulate recommended actions for the consideration of the Commissioner.

2. The key areas for study included:
   a) expectations of those working and learning within the education system;
   b) cooperative business/education projects;
   c) shared responsibilities and their coordination.

The attached final paper would not have become a reality without the dedication and perseverance of the group members. Specifically, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of:

Jim Bromley	Executive Vice-President, Canadian Pacific Rail
Allen Fowlis	President and Chief Executive Officer, Seaspan International Limited
Ron Granholm	Chairman/President, Magnacharge Battery Corporation
Keith Gray	Vice President, Business Council of British Columbia
Bob McLean	Public Affairs Manager, Imperial Oil Limited
Robert Morrow	Partner, Morrow, Jansen and Company
Conrad Pinette	President, Finlay Forest Industries
George Richards	Vice President, Weldwood of Canada
Peter Paul Saunders	President, Saunders Investment Ltd.
Colin Smith	President, British Columbia Chamber of Commerce
Jim Stevens	Pacific Regional Director, Investment Dealers Association of Canada

As a group, the committee members would like to express their appreciation for the opportunity to present their views to the Royal Commission on Education, and to assist the Commissioner in his work for the learners of British Columbia.

Finally, I would like to thank the Commission staff for their efforts, and Stan Garrod for his editorial support.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terry McBurney
Chairman
JTM:sg

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Executive Summary

Building Bridges to the 21st Century

The members of the Royal Commission's Working Group on Business and Education directed their comments and recommendations toward two aspects of the education system: expectations of those working and learning within it, and cooperative business/education projects. Eight areas of discussion were identified for elaboration and recommendation in the full paper:

1. What are the basic skills students will need to prepare for the work world of the 21st century?
2. How can students be educated to be more flexible and adaptive in the face of changing socio-economic conditions and job opportunities?
3. What can be done to create both a spirit of, and support for, lifelong learning that bridges school and work experiences?
4. What are the most appropriate and effective vocational/technical training models for our school system, given the changing nature of the workplace?
5. How can the education and business communities foster a responsible work ethic and economic appreciation in students?
6. What can schools do to help develop both an understanding and a positive spirit of entrepreneurship in students?
7. How can excellence be encouraged, identified and rewarded, both in the British Columbia school system, and in the people who work and learn within it?
8. What part can business leaders and employers play in bridging the gap between their community and the school system in British Columbia?

Recommendations

Basic Skills

1. All basic skills, including reading, writing, listening, public speaking and mathematical operations should be major instructional priorities at all levels in the school system. These basic skills should serve as performance tests in all core subjects.

2. A specific review of all curriculum areas should be undertaken to ensure that all opportunities for teaching the basic employable skills and appropriate methodology are clearly identified for all teachers.

Flexible and Adaptive Graduates

3. School experiences should provide students with an appreciation of the impacts and opportunities that socio-economic trends have on personal and career development. Students should understand that these trends, including the impact of entrepreneurship, will require flexible and adaptive lifestyle patterns and behaviour.

Lifelong Learning

4. Education processes must be modified to instil in students the realization that education and learning form a lifelong continuum.

5. Joint planning efforts between business and education should be directed toward projects which establish lifelong learning opportunites through continuing education and job retraining programs.

Vocational/Technical Training

6. Secondary school education should provide preparatory experiences for students to enter the world of work immediately, or to enter through post-secondary education and training programs.

7. Cooperative business and education projects must be extended to enhance the "image" of vocational/technical careers.

8. Counsellors and teachers, in cooperation with business, should provide a clear and accurate picture which shows the positive contribution of technical and vocational occupations to economic well-being.

Positive Work Ethic/Attitude to Business

9. Schools should promote a positive work ethic. As role models, teachers should display responsible, task-oriented behavior and encourage mature attitudes in students, that include firm expectations about completion of assignments, attendance, punctuality, and good work habits.

10. Business resources, including personnel, should be included in the curriculum and used in instruction of various compulsory subject areas, such as Social Studies.

11. Cooperative business and education projects, such as Junior Achievement, should be extended to include non-business students.

12. Teachers should approach all issues in an objective, balanced manner. This professional demeanor should apply to the teaching of business concepts in all areas of instruction.

Entrepreneurship

13. Students should be given greater opportunity to develop a competitive and entrepreneurial spirit though curricular and extra-curricular school activities, and business-related programs.

14. Social Studies should include basic economic theory and should be compulsory for all students.

Quest for Excellence

15. Excellence in teaching and learning should be recognized and rewarded in meaningful ways.

16. The system should reinforce comprehensive programs for teacher evaluation. Procedures which are designed to re-train, re-direct or remove teachers who are not capable of providing effective educational service to students should be enforced.

17. Incentive programs should be enhanced to recognize outstanding student achievement in all areas of education: technical, academic, arts and special needs.

Business and Education

18. Communication linking the business community, educators, and students should be continuing. Representatives from business should be more directly involved in the classroom; all students and teachers should have more direct experiences in the business world.

19. Curriculum development processes for all programs should include more input and investment from the business sector.

20. Counsellors should develop direct working relationships with employers and place a greater emphasis on career counselling.

Business And Education: Building Bridges To The 21st Century

The children who entered kindergarten in the fall of 1987 will spend their entire adult working life in the twenty-first century. These children will be the workers, managers, and employers in an age where the challenges and opportunities will be greater and more diverse than at any other time in human history. To deal with those challenges and opportunities, students in British Columbia schools must have the quality of education that will give them the knowledge, the skills, and the attitudes that the world and the workplace will demand in the coming century.

The business community, reflecting on the education system from which its workforce has been drawn in recent years, believes that changes will have to be made to the process of education and the climate in which it is offered in order to meet the challenges of the next century. One of the greatest concerns is that a preoccupation with the political process dominates the education system to the extent that the basic professionalism of teachers is often challenged and sometimes undermined. In this charged climate, it becomes difficult for teachers to focus their attention on teaching. They are sometimes placed in a dilemma which forces them to choose between professional teaching responsibilities and outside obligations. Necessary changes will not occur within the school system until politics are set aside, and confrontation is replaced with earnest cooperation undertaken in an arena of trust among all stakeholders whose common, foremost concern is delivery of the best possible education.

The importance of this task, and the challenges associated with it, cannot be underestimated. Our ability to provide employment for successive generations and to grow and prosper as a province may well depend on our ability to appropriately educate the children now entering British Columbia's schools in order that they may live, learn, and work effectively in the twenty-first century.

The Royal Commission's Working Group on Business and Education has identified eight issues for consideration in this paper:

1. What are the basic skills students will need to prepare for the work world of the 21st century?
2. How can students be educated to be more flexible and adaptive in the face of changing socio-economic conditions and job opportunities?
3. What can be done to create both a spirit of, and support for, lifelong learning that bridges school and work experiences?
4. What are the most appropriate and effective vocational/technical training models for our school system, given the changing nature of the workplace?
5. How can the education and business communities foster a responsible work ethic and economic appreciation in students?
6. What can schools do to help develop both an understanding and a positive spirit of entrepreneurship in students?
7. How can excellence be encouraged, identified and rewarded, both in the British Columbia school system, and in the people who work and learn within it?
8. What part can business leaders and employers play in bridging the gap between their community and the school system in British Columbia?

Basic Skills and the Work World of the 21st Century

Employers judge the school system by the nature and quality of the basic skills demonstrated by the young men and women whom they employ. Many British Columbia employers believe that a significant number of recent school-leavers whom they have hired are unable to demonstrate the communication and computational skills needed for their positions. The basic skills that British Columbia employers are seeking from students are effective language and mathematical skills: the ability to write letters, memoranda, or reports in a clear and concise manner, free of spelling, grammatical, or computational errors; the ability to express themselves clearly in oral speech and the ability to listen effectively to others; the ability to read a variety of printed materials with comprehension and at a rate which meets the reader's purpose; the ability to understand and carry out basic mathematical operations and solve mathematical problems; and the ability to succeed in other core subjects.

This concern for basic skills must not, however, be seen simply as a "back to the basics" position. British Columbia employers also include such areas as interpersonal communication skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving among the desirable basic attributes that British Columbia school-leavers should possess.

Recommendations—Basic Skills

1. All basic skills, including reading, writing, listening, public speaking, and mathematical operations should be major instructional priorities at all levels in the school system. These basic skills should serve as performance tests in all core subjects.

2. A specific review of all curriculum areas should be undertaken to ensure that all opportunities for teaching the basic employable skills and appropriate methodology are clearly identified for all teachers.

Wanted: Recent Graduates—Must be Flexible and Adaptive

The changing nature of the workforce and the places in which they work will increasingly demand flexibility and adaptability on the part of employees and employers. It is increasingly apparent that recent economic developments, such as the Pacific Rim Initiatives and the Free Trade Agreement, will have a significant impact on the skills and knowledge required of students. Patterns of employment and education indicate that the prototype of the adaptable and flexible employee now and in the years to come is someone who constantly seeks opportunities for upgrading and retraining.

While it is true that there is a tendency for each generation to plan for the future by using current information about career opportunities such as present demand for specific vocational/technical training, many observers suggest that the well-educated generalist will be in demand in future years.

Indeed, the concept of lifelong learning, flexibility, and adaptability also imply the ability of an individual to "learn how to learn."

To achieve these ends, students need to master basic skills and understand when, how, where, and why they should be applied to everyday working life. It is also critical that academic and job counselling be available to senior high school students and that students be given the opportunity to meet with representatives of the business community, public service, colleges, vocational schools, universities, and other institutions to assist with this process. Career days, work experience programs, speakers programs and counselling and placement programs have all been the subjects of successful co-operative efforts between schools and the larger community in various locations throughout British Columbia.

Recommendations—Flexible and Adaptive Graduates

3. School experiences should provide students with an appreciation of the impacts and opportunities that socio-economic trends have on personal and career development. Students should understand that these trends, including the impact of entrepreneurship, will require flexible and adaptive lifestyle patterns and behaviour.

Learning About Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning should be modelled in both the school and the workplace. Lifelong learning will be essential to effective participation in the work world of the twenty-first century. Employees and employers who do not continue to upgrade their knowledge and skills will be left behind. Recognition of the need for lifelong learning is also the key to identifying what is needed in a sound basic education for children attending school, and to bridging the gap between the larger economic community and the school system in British Columbia.

Recommendations—Lifelong Learning

4. Education processes must be modified to instil in students the realization that education and learning form a lifelong continuum.

5. Joint planning efforts between business and education should be directed toward projects which establish lifelong learning opportunities through continuing education and job retraining programs.

Vocational/Technical Training Models for the 21st Century

Vocational and technical programs in high schools have suffered from a perception on the part of students and educators that they are a second tier alternative for those who are unable to deal with traditional academic programs. This is caused, in part, by an erroneous belief that those who enter such programs do so as apprentices and assistants after dropping out of school. In reality technicians in the workforce today are highly skilled workers. High schools should provide the base upon which a technical/vocational training program can be built. Teachers and counsellors should also be able to outline the relative benefits and costs of various vocational training options to help students make informed career decisions.

Closer ties between schools and the employer community are needed to improve students' understanding of the opportunities associated with technical/vocational training. Industry can provide effective models for work-related education, as business employers are devoting increasing time and energies to training the people they employ.

Recommendations—Vocational/ Technical Training

6. Secondary school education should provide preparatory experiences for students to enter the world of work immediately, or to enter through post-secondary education and training programs.

7. Cooperative business and education projects must be extended to enhance the "image" of vocational/technical careers.

8. Counsellors and teachers, in cooperation with business, should provide a clear and accurate picture which shows the positive contribution of technical and vocational occupations to economic well-being.

Development of a Positive Work Ethic/Business Attitude

Employers believe that students' school experiences should result in a positive attitude and work ethic. They are concerned that school-leavers often appear to have poorly developed work habits, unrealistic expectations of employment, and negative or disinterested attitudes toward the world of work. While recognizing that society as a whole shares the responsibility for the development of a work ethic and attitudes toward business, members of this working group would like to see schools do a more effective job in this area.

Schools can participate in the development of a positive work ethic by ensuring that all students be given clear and explicit expectations regarding the performance of assigned tasks and be held accountable for those tasks. Failure to attend school, to use time productively, or to perform assigned tasks should carry with them consequences that are clearly reflected in school reporting procedures. Teachers should also be cognizant of the fact that they serve as role models for their students, and that many of these basic attitudes can be learned from positive examples and can be discouraged by poor examples.

Recommendations—Positive Work Ethic/ Attitude to Business

9. Schools should promote a positive work ethic. As role models, teachers should display responsible, task-oriented behavior and encourage mature attitudes in students, that include firm expectations about completion of assignments, attendance, punctuality, and good work habits.

10. Business resources, including personnel, should be included in the curriculum and used in instruction of various compulsory subject areas, such as Social Studies.

11. Cooperative business and education projects, such as Junior Achievement, should be extended to include non-business students.

12. Teachers should approach all issues in an objective, balanced manner. This professional demeanor should apply to the teaching of business concepts in all areas of instruction.

Schools and Entrepreneurship/Intrapreneurship

Related to the development of a responsible work ethic is the development of an understanding of, and a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship—the creative spirit that drives our economic system. Opportunities abound within the school and community to participate in programs that encourage and develop entrepreneurial attitudes and understandings. Junior Achievement, Project Business, and government-industry sponsored student summer initiative programs are all positive examples of programs that lead students to plunge into the real world of business endeavours. Extracurricular activities such as sports and the arts, including drama and music, also help to develop a competitive spirit and sense of teamwork.

Currently, entepreneurially oriented programs are available only sporadically throughout the system. In many cases the delivery depends upon the varying degrees of commitment of individual teachers or community leaders. The value of these programs and extracurricular activities is such that they should be accessible to all students.

A spirit of entrepreneurship cannot be learned from schools alone. Students need to experience entrepreneurship as an integral part of their education, and to see for themselves how taking risks and creatively investing human and capital resources can bring economic reward and personal satisfaction. To this end, Social Studies, Consumer, and Business education courses should give students a better understanding of how our economic system operates.

Similarly intrapreneurship, the creative, entrepreneurial spirit within a company or organization, must be illustrated and encouraged. An intrapreneurial individual is one who is creative, shows initiative, and seeks growth opportunities for the company and for him/herself—an entrepreneur within the organization.

Recommendations—Entrepreneurship

13. Students should be given greater opportunity to develop a competitive and entrepreneurial spirit though curricular and extra-curricular school activities, and business-related programs.

14. Social studies should include basic economic theory and should be compulsory for all students.

The Quest for Excellence

Excellence must be encouraged, identified and rewarded in the school system. It begins with the quest for excellence, a commitment to greatness, and to recognition and encouragement when it is identified. The education system must reflect this quest and this commitment, and must reinforce the processes needed to attain and maintain excellence. It is clear that the quest for excellence begins with teachers, and may end with teachers if it is missing. Therefore, there should be both provisions for rewarding excellent teachers, and provisions for re-directing or eliminating the non-productive and incompetent.

Similarly, there should be compelling incentives for recognition of excellence in students, in their learning and other school activities. The quest for excellence should seek the best possible education of all students, appropriate to their interests and abilities. Excellence cannot be achieved if "what is" drives the school system instead of "what ought to be." The quest for excellence, therefore, must be reflected in the goals and objectives set for our schools, programs, administrators, teachers, and students.

Recommendations—Quest for Excellence

15. Excellence in teaching and learning should be recognized and rewarded in meaningful ways.

16. The system should reinforce comprehensive programs for teacher evaluation. Procedures which are designed to re-train, re-direct, or remove teachers who are not capable of providing effective educational service to students should be enforced.

17. Incentive programs should be enhanced to recognize outstanding student achievement in all areas of education: technical, vocational, academic, arts, and special needs.

Business and Education

Cooperative ventures linking business and education, among them work experience, co-op education, Junior Achievement, and business speakers programs, have been found to be very effective. The business community is concerned, however, that where and when such ventures exist, they prove to be the exception rather than the rule. Business, in general, is not as involved in "schooling" as it could be. Indeed, there is the perception that these two communities represent "two solitudes."

To bridge this perceived gap, the business community must ensure that it is willing and able to provide the resources required to honour this commitment. As well, the education community must ensure that every possible effort is made to seek involvement of business. This will require more extensive lines of communication between the two communities and recognition by both employers and educators that such cooperation is a two way street and that there is room both for business involvement in the schools and for school involvement in business.

Recommendations—Business and Education

18. Communication linking the business community, educators, and students should be continuing. Representatives from business should be more directly involved in the classroom; all students and teachers should have more direct experiences in the business world.

19. Curriculum development processes for all programs should include more input and investment from the business sector.

20. Counsellors should enjoy direct working relationships with employers and place a greater emphasis on career counselling.

Post Script

Members of the Working Group on Business and Education wish to add a final note. It is their firm belief that the business community places a high value on the need for a well educated citizenry—citizens who will be productive, responsible contributors to the larger society as well as to the economic sector. The Group holds, too, the position that the provincial government must accord a high priority to the education of our youth.

Members of the business community have a keen interest in, and a strong commitment to, education and are willing to participate on a broad scale in cooperative efforts to improve the quality of educational programs and services in British Columbia.

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Student Task Force

April 1988

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Introduction

The learners of British Columbia, represented by a select group of grade ten, eleven and twelve students, are pleased to submit the following report for consideration by the Commissioner.

A total of fifty-four students from all areas of the province participated in a weekend conference held March 25-27, 1988 in Vancouver at the Jericho Hill School. The students were broken down into six groups to consider various issues on education. Saturday was taken up with individual group discussions on the many questions the students had been asked to consider. Sunday morning saw the groups come together into a plenary session. Each group designated one member to present the views of the group. Reports were given and each group was questioned on the rationale behind its recommendations. The conference then adjourned.

This report was compiled by Royal Commission staff who attended the conference as observers and organizers in consultation with the nine students who acted as group facilitators/discussion leaders from Delta's Seaquam Secondary School. It was then forwarded to each participant for final approval.

The report contains six major sections, each dealing with a different area within the system of concern to the students. The six areas are:

1) Student—Personnel Concerns

2) Student Rights and Responsibilities

3) Counselling

4) Graduation Concerns

5) Curriculum Concerns

6) Other Concerns

Student—Personnel Concerns

A) Interaction Between Students and Personnel

The general theme expressed in this area was one of increased communication. We feel that there are, at present, not enough opportunities for students to voice their opinions on the education system in British Columbia. There should be avenues of access open to students at all levels of the system, from the classroom teacher to the Minister of Education.

This communication should take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect, rather than confrontation and humiliation, as is too often the case now. Often a teacher disciplines a student in front of an entire class, thus degrading the student and not allowing for fair rebuttal. Also, if more communication took place on a one to one basis, there would be better opportunity for the student to give his or her side of the story, and perhaps for the teacher to admit they made a mistake, without public embarassment.

It is up to the teacher to have good communication skills, thus making classes more interesting and improving the learning situation.

One discussion group also suggested that there should be improved communication between students and school boards. They suggested two options: either having student representation on the board itself, or instituting board/student liaison committee which could offer student input into issues. The board would look to the students for their opinions in a collaborative atmosphere on both student related and other topics.

Recommendations

(1) *Establish formal links of communication between students and higher authorities.*
(2) *Teacher training programs should include an emphasis on communication skills, both oral and written.*
(3) *Conferences such as the one that produced this paper should be a regular occurrence—perhaps as often as four per school year, to inform the Minister about student concerns. As well, these conferences should be longer—perhaps three or four full days rather than just two.*

B) Teachers and Administrators

Good teachers have a good personality and speak well. They are patient, calm, and they learn from the students as well as helping students learn. They are flexible and understanding, and they listen to and care about the students they are teaching. These are just a few of the qualities expressed by various groups at the conference.

Administrators should be visible and available to students, as well as being aware of and involved in all aspects of a school's life. However, according to at least one group, principals should not teach in the regular classroom.

Schools, including independent schools, should be evaluated and accredited periodically by an independent Board of Review which would have a comprehensive mandate. It would look at facilities, maintenance, teaching quality, discipline, safety standards, course quality, etc.

Teacher evaluation should include significant input from students. By the time a student reaches the senior years, he or she can recognize a good teacher. These opinions should carry some weight. Teachers should have to be re-evaluated periodically, regardless of performance. One group suggested the creation of a teacher award—teacher of the month or year—which would carry with it significant rewards and would be something teachers would strive for.

The problems involving teacher seniority and dismissal were also raised and it was felt that there is too much emphasis on seniority when a school must reduce its complement of staff. The competency and teaching skills of a teacher should be given much stronger weighting in such situations.

Recommendations

(4) *Teacher evaluation should take place periodically on a set schedule and should include significant student input. Student opinions should be respected.*

(5) *Good teachers should be encouraged in their jobs through some form of reward system.*

C) Substitute Teachers

This is a problem area. Virtually all students agreed on this. Some groups said that qualifications for substitutes should be more strict, ensuring that they are trained to teach the subject to which they are assigned. Another suggestion was that substitutes should not teach lessons if they are only in for a short period—rather, they should supervise either preassigned work or tests. To this end, the regular teacher should try to, when possible, prepare specific course plans for the next day. This would give some direction to a substitute should the regular teacher be unable to attend school. Another point was that in the case of a prolonged absence, there should only be one substitute teacher for the entire absence, not a different one every week or day as sometimes occurs.

Recommendations

(6) *To the greatest degree possible, substitute teachers should always be trained in the subject area in which they are to teach. Substitutes should be hired not only on the basis of seniority, but also on the basis of their area of expertise.*

Student Rights and Responsibilities

A) Student Rights, Responsibilities and Discipline

The rights of students in the education system permeate this paper—they enter into all aspects of education and are therefore found in all sections of our submission. It was noted by one group that a school's authority does not extend beyond school functions—a student's free time is his or her own.

Student responsibilities to the system were expressed by one of the groups as follows: to attend school, to do school work, to get involved in school life through sports, student council and other activities and to be, in general, a member of the school community.

Another subject addressed in this area was homework. Some groups saw homework as a responsibility, while others said it was the student's own choice, and that homework should have less of a bearing on marks. However, some noted that homework assignments teach time planning and management, and also prepare students for later life.

Discipline was a very popular topic of discussion. Virtually all aspects of this topic were covered by one of the groups, and there were some common threads. The main areas covered were skipping out of classes and methods of discipline.

Skipping out is an interesting problem. Some students said that missing a class was a student's own punishment, as the student loses the opportunity to learn. Others argued that while this might be the case, many students do not realize what they are losing until it is too late and you must therefore punish students who skip out to keep them attending. It was agreed that students who do not skip out often should not be harshly punished for a small number of offences. It is the chronic truant who should be punished. Also, the parents in such a situation should always be notified. As well, the whole question of notes from home in the case of an absence was discussed. Generally, students should only need a note if they miss a significant amount of school, and senior students (grades eleven and twelve) should not need a note at all.

In the area of methods of discipline, suspensions and "writing lines" were deemed uneffective. Some of the standard punishments were noted as effective—garbage duty and other "public labour" in particular. There was a difference over detentions—some said they work, while others said no. The most popular method, however, was something relatively new—community work. Jobs such as recycling and the like are effective and constructive. Another suggestion was the "inschool suspension". The student must attend school, but in a separate class—perhaps just a supervised study class. As well, the breaks, such as recess and lunch, would be staggered so as to not coincide with the rest of the school. Lastly, as a general rule, the punishment should somehow be related to the offence, if possible.

Recommendations

(7) *It must be recognized that students have certain responsibilities and rights in the education system. So long as they observe the former, they are entitled to the latter.*

(8) *Punishments in the school system should be both effective and constructive. This not only helps the school community, but creates a better student self-image.*

Counselling

A) Counselling

This was an area of much concern with the students. We feel that in today's complex society, trained, expert counsellors are a necessity for students. However, the system has changed little to adapt to our needs. We want to use the counsellors more, but we do not feel they meet our needs in all areas.

Perhaps the most important point in counselling is confidentiality. The student/counsellor relationship was compared by one group to a lawyer/client one. If confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, the students will not open up to the counsellor and little will be accomplished. One group said that the student should be able to tell their counsellor what they are not able to tell their parents.

On the more practical side, certain things were noted. It was felt that students should retain the same counsellor throughout the secondary years, as this promotes a friendship which could be helpful. When this is not possible because a counsellor leaves a school, there should be some system to ensure that students are not placed with a new counsellor who is totally unfamiliar to them. Counsellors should be given special training as counsellors and should be counsellors only—they should not have the additional load of teaching classes. Finally, there should be more counsellors—one group suggested a 1:100 counsellor/student ratio.

Recommendations

(9) *Counsellors should be specially trained professionals who perform only the functions of a counsellor, including course planning, post graduate planning, job assistance and emotional counselling.*
(10) *There should be more counsellors in every school.*
(11) *Students should retain the same counsellor throughout their secondary years when possible.*

B) Peer Counselling and Peer Tutoring

The idea of peer counsellors, that is, allowing students to be counselled by fellow students, was a very popular one at the conference. Four of the six groups recommended specifically that a peer counselling program should be available to all students. We feel that it is a useful service—sometimes a student just needs someone to talk to, and if that someone is closer to their own age, it often can make it easier for the student to open up.

There were various ideas on how exactly to set up such a program. One group suggested making peer counselling a credit course for grade 11 and 12 students, including instructional units in areas such as psychology and counselling theory. Another group said that there should be some form of recognition, but in a non-academic way. This might encourage a wide range of students to get involved. It was also noted that the use of peer counsellors can relieve some of the heavy workload currently being born entirely by adult counsellors.

The discussion of peer tutoring went along much the same lines. We feel that, in general, a tutor can assist a struggling student immensely. Also, the rewards gained, simply in terms of satisfaction, by the tutor are significant. However, more students might be encouraged to get involved in such a program, two groups said, if there was some kind of concrete dividend. It was suggested that here, too, there could be a credit course which would include units on instruc-

tion methods, psychology, learning difficulties, and other topics. Another option would be to give peer tutors a salary if they are working outside of regular school hours.

Recommendations

(12) *All students should have access to a peer counselling program, both as a counsellor and as a patron. There should be some form of reward for peer counsellors.*

(13) *All students should have access to a peer tutoring program, both as a tutor and as a student. There should be some form of reward for peer tutors.*

Graduation Concerns

A) Graduation Requirements

In the area of graduation requirements, it was generally felt that current standards are reasonable and should essentially remain the same. The major area of concern was the area of enriched programs for senior secondary students. A few of the students at the conference had access to programs such as the International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement. Others who did not have such programs felt that they should be able to participate in these types of programs as well. At least two groups recommended that these course of study should be more readily available.

In the area of credit for specific courses, it was felt that enriched courses or honours programs should somehow be recognized on the 'Dogwood' certificate. Perhaps increased credit could be offered. One group suggested offering one and one-half credits for certain courses.

Recommendations

(14) Some form of enriched courses for academically inclined students, such as the Advanced Placement program, should be offered in at least every district throughout the province.

(15) Enriched courses should be recognized in some way on secondary school transcripts.

B) Grading and Exams

It was felt that the current grading system is unfair because of its inaccuracy. Letter grades simply are not specific enough. Therefore, percentages should be included as well on report cards. Others felt that all grades should include a component for overall work as well as work on essays and tests.

It was also felt that there is often too much recognition afforded to the academically inclined students. To remedy this, one group suggested the creation of multiple honour rolls for each school—one in each of four areas: sciences and mathematics, English and social studies, business studies, and vocational studies.

All six groups addressed the issue of provincial exams and there was unanimous agreement that while they are necessary, they should not count for 50% of the final grade 12 mark. This is simply too high—two hours of work at the end of the year should not have the same weight as ten months of work. Also, this encourages (perhaps forces) teachers to "teach to the exams" rather than teaching the curriculum in full. One group also suggested a "means test" for exams—if a student maintained a 'B' average over the course of the year, they would not have to write final exams in the years before grade 12.

Recommendations

(16) The grading system should be reviewed and improved to more accurately reflect the achievements of students—in particular, percentages as well as letter grades should be included on report cards.

(17) Provincial exams should be worth no more than 40%, but not less than 25%, of the final grade 12 mark.

Curriculum Concerns

A) General Concerns

We had many concerns in the area of curriculum. Included in this discussion are things such as timetables and general programs. While each group discussed many topics in this area, there were some common threads on certain questions.

The relative merits of the semester system versus the eight block rotation system were debated in two groups and both came down strongly in favor of semesters. They felt that the additional two courses per year possible allowed students to try a more diverse set of programs—eight courses per year simply does not allow for this flexibility in the senior years. It also permits the creation of "tutorial" blocks, which allow for the one-on-one contact between teacher and student which can be so valuable, and even essential in certain cases, to a student's success. In either case, it was felt that the system should be standard throughout the province—not different from district to district or even school to school.

"Spares" or study blocks, it was felt, are difficult because they are so open to abuse. Perhaps, two groups suggested, spares could be limited to academic students or those who maintain a 'B' average.

We felt that there should be more emphasis on practical experience for all students, in the form of career preparation courses and/or work experience programs. Particularly in the junior high school years, when students have more free blocks, they should be encouraged to take a wider range of courses, such as industrial education, home economics and the fine arts. One group also suggested that there should be "work experience week" opportunities available to all senior secondary students.

There were a few more general concerns expressed by individual groups:

- there should be more of a general emphasis on Pacific Rim countries throughout the curriculum
- class sizes should be reduced
- elementary education should have a strong emphasis on cooperation rather than competition
- parents should have a better understanding of the school system in general
- children should be screened at an early age to identify any specific learning conditions and given special attention if necessary

Recommendations

(18) The semester system should be examined as a way of allowing more freedom for students, with a view to possible implementation throughout the province.
(19) Study blocks should only be allowed to students whose timetable shows a need for extra study time.
(20) Career preparation courses and work experience programs should be readily available to all students in the senior secondary years.

B) Family Life and Consumer Education

The general consensus in this area was that while parts of both Consumer Education and the new Family Life program serve a useful purpose in the education of students, there is too much superfluous material included in both courses. Students today are not adequately prepared for life after school, it is true, but these courses do not meet that need. There are so many other topics that should be covered instead of what is currently dealt with. The solution offered was to condense and amalgamate these two programs, along with other useful topics, into one course, to make up a new "Life Skills" program. This new course could include units on topics such as current events, first aid, the Canadian political system and others.

Another concern was that this course should be taught by a young, qualified instructor who could relate to students and the problems they face in their teenage years.

Recommendations

(21) *Create a new course dealing with general life skills which would incorporate the more useful elements of Consumer Education and the Family Life program, as well as covering other topics.*

(22) *Ensure that instructors teaching topics such as sex education and consumer education are qualified and comfortable with the topic and can deal with students in an appropriate manner.*

C) Social Studies

We feel that courses in this area, including history and geography in the senior years, should be more relevant to students. Topics such as current events, politics, and international affairs should play a more prominent role in these courses. Geography should have more discussion of human (as opposed to physical) geography.

Another suggestion was the creation of a new course—Canadian Studies—which would cover Canadian politics, history, literature and Canada's role in the world.

Recommendations

(23) *Review the social studies curriculum, including history and geography courses, with a view to emphasizing Canadian studies and making the content more germane.*

D) Physical Education

We feel that the current system for P.E. is generally acceptable. P.E. should be mandatory until grade 10, but optional thereafter. However, there were a few suggestions, particularly in the area of grading. It was felt that there is, at present, too much emphasis on achievement as opposed to effort. Some students simply do not have the physical makeup to be proficient at all sports. They do, however, try to participate and this should be rewarded. Some groups suggested a system where no real grades are given and the course is simply a pass/fail question or a three level grade.

A couple of groups also felt that there should be a unit on first aid in the junior secondary P.E. curriculum. As well, others felt that the curriculum should be revised to lean more towards general fitness and health rather than "being a jock."

Recommendations

(24) Physical Education should be mandatory until grade 10, but an elective course thereafter.
(25) Physical education activities should have a stronger emphasis on the general fitness and health of students.

E) Language Programs

Education in another language, most particularly French, is important. We feel, however, that the current program is in need of some review. Languages are most easily learned at a young age, and therefore French instruction should begin earlier in the elementary school and only be mandatory through grade 10, but remain available as an elective through grade 12. There should be more of an emphasis on conversational skills, rather than grammar. Also, it should be ensured that all teachers who teach another language are fluent in that language.

There should also be more language courses available, such as German, Spanish and Pacific Rim Languages.

Recommendations

(26) French instruction should begin at an early age in the elementary school, and remain mandatory through grade 10. The course should have a strong emphasis on conversational skills.

F) Other Curriculum Concerns

Two groups mentioned computer studies, feeling that this is an important area for our future students. One group said that a computer course should be highly recommended, while the other felt that there should a unit on computers included in junior secondary science to ensure students get some computer instruction. They also felt that elementary schools should have computers, to get young children used to them early in life.

One group came out strongly on education for more remote areas. They felt that certain courses, particularly senior academic ones, are very difficult to complete by correspondence alone when a school does not have sufficient demand to offer a course. They therefore suggested that districts hire a "travelling teacher" whose job it would be to travel between schools, perhaps visiting each school once a week, to assist students in courses such as the senior sciences, literature or business education. Such a teacher's only job would be this travelling, and they would be a qualified teacher in the subjects they would be advising on.

Other Concerns

A) Facilities and Equipment

There were few concerns in this area. A few groups mentioned some problems that they perceived in some schools. In particular, it was felt that all schools should have a cafeteria, there should be more extensive research libraries in schools, and there should be more equipment, especially audio-visual gear. It was suggested that there could be a ratio of equipment to students.

B) Mentally/Physically Handicapped

One strong feeling that came through in this area was that all schools should be accessible to all students—in particular, wheelchair bound students. It was also felt that handicapped students, even if they cannot be integrated into a regular classroom, should attend a regular school. Even though they may attend a segregated class, they still could interact socially with other students.

Recommendations

(27) *School facilities should be wheelchair accessible.*

C) Extracurricular Activities

All groups agreed that extracurricular activities are an essential part of school life. We feel that there should be increased funding for all types of activities, particularly in rural and northern areas where the travel budgets for sports teams and bands can be very high. One suggestion for raising funds was to establish a lottery which would be entirely devoted to funding school activities.

Other points included stressing of safety in all aspects, but most especially transportation—all bus drivers must be qualified and buses should have seat belts. Parental involvement in activities should be encouraged.

Recommendations

(28) *Extracurricular activities are essential to a student's school career and should be encouraged. There should be funding to ensure that no activity is denied due to a lack of money.*

Post Script

The members of the Student Task Force wish to thank the Commissioner for allowing them the opportunity to present some of the learner community's concerns to the Royal Commission. It was an invaluable experience and we can only hope that you will respect and listen to our recommendations.

It must be understood that the text of the report is no less important than the recommendations, but because there were so many topics to be discussed, some groups simply did not reach all of them in the short time allotted. The text contains the points that were discussed only by one or two groups. Since a majority of the Task Force did not discuss these points, it was felt that they could not be included as formal recommendations to the Commissioner. They are, never the less, important concerns that students from around the province do share.

We realize that the majority of us, if not all, will not remain in the school system long enough to benefit from the fruits of our labours here. If, however, some of our work can further your task of improving education in the province for future students, then our work has been useful, and that is reward enough. Therefore, we urge you to push strongly for improvements which can only benefit all the citizens of our province in the years to come.

As perhaps the only major voice of the learners you will hear from, we understand the gravity of the role we are playing in the Royal Commission's deliberations. We only hope that we have lived up to the commission which you so generously passed on to us. Thank you.

The Royal Commission on Education
Student Task Force
April, 1988

Summary of Recommendations

(1) Establish formal links of communication between students and higher authorities.

(2) Teacher training programs should include an emphasis on communication skills, both oral and written.

(3) Conferences such as the one that produced this paper should be a regular occurrence—perhaps as often as four per school year, to inform the Minister about student concerns. As well, these conferences should be longer—perhaps three or four full days rather than just two.

(4) Teacher evaluation should take place periodically on a set schedule and should include significant student input. Student opinions should be respected.

(5) Good teachers should be encouraged in their jobs through some form of reward system.

(6) To the greatest degree possible, substitute teachers should always be trained in the subject area in which they are to teach. Substitutes should be hired not only on the basis of seniority, but also on the basis of their area of expertise.

(7) It must be recognized that students have certain responsibilities and rights in the education system. So long as they observe the former, they are entitled to the latter.

(8) Punishments in the school system should be both effective and constructive. This not only helps the school community, but creates a better student self-image.

(9) Counsellors should be specially trained professionals who perform only the functions of a counsellor, including course planning, post graduate planning, job assistance and emotional counselling.

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(13) All students should have access to a peer tutoring program, both as a tutor and as a student. There should be some form of reward for peer tutors.

(14) Some form of enriched courses for academically inclined students, such as the Advanced Placement program, should be offered in at least every district throughout the province.

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(21) Create a new course dealing with general life skills which would incorporate the more useful elements of Consumer Education and the Family Life program, as well as covering other topics.

(22) Ensure that instructors teaching topics such as sex education and consumer education are qualified and comfortable with the topic and can deal with students in an appropriate manner.

(23) Review the social studies curriculum, including history and geography courses, with a view to emphasizing Canadian studies and making the content more germane.

(24) Physical Education should be mandatory until grade 10, but an elective course thereafter.

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(27) School facilities should be wheelchair accessible.

(28) Extracurricular activities are essential to a student's school career and should be encouraged. There should be funding to ensure that no activity is denied due to a lack of money.

Student Participants

Student	*Grade*	*City*	*School*
ALLAN, Brent	11	Nelson	L. V. Rogers
AUCHTER, Karen	12	Queen Charlotte City	Queen Charlotte
BADYAL, Navdip	12	Campbell River	Robron
BENNETT, Le	12	Kitimat	Mt. Elizabeth
BODEL, Graham	12	Vancouver	St. Georges
BOHN, Marilyn	12	Cache Creek	Ashcroft
BRIDGWATER, Eric	11	Invermere	David Thompson
BROWN, Stacey	11	Kitimat	Mt. Elizabeth
CAMPBELL, Marion	12	Coquitlam	Centennial
COHEN, Vered	11	West Vancouver	York House
CONTINI, Lino	12	Fort St. John	North Peace
CZIRFUSZ, Vernon	12	Houston	Houston
EDGER, Kim	10	Delta	Seaquam
ENNS, Heather	11	Delta	Seaquam
EWING, Stefan	12	Vancouver	University Hill
ERTL, Martin	12	Richmond	Vancouver College
FERRONATO, Piero	11	Burnaby	Notre Dame
FOSTER, Chris	10	Delta	Seaquam
GAMMAGE, Amanda	12	Fort St. John	North Peace
GAUNT, Jason	12	Port Hardy	Port Hardy
GILL, Jag	12	Victoria	Mount Douglas
HALL, Hopi	11	Ganges	Gulf Islands
HARRISON, Cheryl	12	Masset	George Dawson
HENDERS, Kevin	12	North Vancouver	Handsworth
HEWGILL, Tracy	12	Delta	Seaquam
HORSWELL, Craig	11	Prince George	D. P. Todd
JOHNSON, Malcolm	12	Pender Island	Gulf Islands
KARVELIS, Gerry	12	Vancouver	Kitsilano
KRAMER, Melissa	12	West Vancouver	Hillside
KUNG, James	12	Coquitlam	Port Moody
LEE, Jay	12	Delta	Seaquam
LEON, Gricelda	12	Osoyoos	Osoyoos

Student	*Grade*	*City*	*School*
LEON, Sylvia	11	Vancouver	Notre Dame
MA, Wendy	12	Vancouver	Vancouver Technical
McATHY, Karen	12	Alert Bay	North Island
McGORAN, David	12	Vancouver	Fraser Academy
MITCHELL, Lynn	12	Ashcroft	Ashcroft
MUIR, Brad	11	Delta	Seaquam
MUNSHAW, Kevin	12	Surrey	Bible Fellowship Christian Academy
NAEGENI, Monika	11	Prince George	College Heights
OLIVER, Sean	12	Delta	Seaquam
RAINE, Jennifer	12	Nelson	L. V. Rogers
REID, John	12	Richmond	Vancouver College
RUSCH, Michael	12	Osoyoos	Osoyoos
SARTE, Tisha	12	Vancouver	John Oliver
SCOBBIE, Adrienne	11	Delta	Seaquam
SEVERSON, Michael	12	Burnaby	Bible Fellowship Christian Academy
SMITH, GerriLynn	12	Campbell River	Phoenix
STIENWAND, Tracy	11	Invermere	David Thompson
STRUTHERS, Kim	12	Smithers	Smithers
VICTOR, Ernie	12	Rosedale	Chilliwack
WONG, Vincent	12	Vancouver	Winston Churchill
WIGHTMAN, Adam	12	Vancouver	Prince of Wales
ZEISMAN, Derek	11	Delta	Seaquam